

# Christianity and Science Part Three: Christian Engagement with Science

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**PROCLAMATION**  
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

# Why Christians Should Care About Science

<b>Glorify God</b>	<b>Glorify man</b>
Display God's handiwork in creation	Demonstrate man's own ingenuity
Obey the cultural mandate as vice-regents	Establish the kingdom of man
Love our neighbor	Oppress our neighbor
Defend the faith	Debunk the faith

# Two Types of Men

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## **1 Corinthians 15:42-49**

<sup>42</sup> So is it with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. <sup>43</sup> It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. <sup>44</sup> It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. <sup>45</sup> Thus it is written, “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. <sup>46</sup> But it is not the spiritual that is first but the natural, and then the spiritual. <sup>47</sup> The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. <sup>48</sup> As was the man of dust, so also are those who are of the dust, and as is the man of heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. <sup>49</sup> Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven.

## **Matthew 12:30**

<sup>30</sup> Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters.

## **Genesis 3:15**

<sup>15</sup> I will put enmity between you and the woman,  
and between your offspring and her offspring;  
he shall bruise your head,  
and you shall bruise his heel.

# The Antithesis and Science

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- ◆ There is an antithesis between natural man and spiritual man that affects all areas of life
- ◆ Science is never an ethically neutral activity
- ◆ The spiritual man participates in science for God
- ◆ The natural man participates in science to turn it against God
- ◆ The natural man both assumes and rejects a Christian worldview

# God's Common Grace to All Men

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## **Psalm 145:9**

<sup>9</sup> The LORD is good to all,  
and his mercy is over all that he has made.

## **Matthew 5:44-45**

<sup>44</sup> But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, <sup>45</sup> so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

## **Romans 2:3-4**

<sup>3</sup> Do you suppose, O man – you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself – that you will escape the judgment of God? <sup>4</sup> Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

## **1 Timothy 4:10**

<sup>10</sup> For to this end we toil and strive, because we have our hope set on the living God, who is the Savior of all people, especially of those who believe.

# Common Grace and Science

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- ◆ God's common grace to all men enables meaningful engagement with the natural world
- ◆ God restrains the effects of sin from producing an absolute decline in science
- ◆ Natural man can make discoveries about the natural world that are true as far as they go
- ◆ Natural man's inconsistent worldview results from being made in God's image and knowing him, despite suppressing that truth
- ◆ Knowledge of the universe from the natural man is a gift of God
- ◆ Common grace enables scientific dialogue between the natural and spiritual man

# Antithesis and Common Grace Together

The antithesis and common grace need to be considered together as Christians engage with science

		Antithesis	
		-	+
Common Grace	-	Endorsing natural man's attempts at autonomy	Neglecting God's common gifts to man
	+	Out of context; Meaningless	Critical yet not dismissive

# When Conflicts Arise

In light of the antithesis, it should be expected that conflicts will arise between the science of the natural man and the science of the spiritual man

Conflicts *do not* arise because of:

Subject matter

God's revelatory word in nature

Conflicts *do* arise because of:

Contradictory worldviews

Effects of sin



# God of the Gaps

**“...into every gap they put their delusion, their stopgap, which they called God”**

- Friedrich Nietzsche

- ◆ In pre-scientific times, man created the idea of God as an explanation for what they didn't know, or “gaps” in knowledge
- ◆ As science progresses, we gain knowledge and fill in these “gaps” where we once inserted the idea of God
- ◆ Where there is a natural explanation, God is no longer needed to explain that “gap”
- ◆ Scientific knowledge continues to grow and the need for God correspondingly diminishes

**Assumes God is not God**

# Burden of Proof

**“What can be asserted without evidence can also be dismissed without evidence”**

- Christopher Hitchens

- ◆ The “default” setting should be the simplest one – a universe without the supernatural is more simple than a universe with the supernatural
- ◆ The burden of proof should lie with the person making a positive claim rather than the person denying that claim
- ◆ Exemplified by Russel’s Teapot
- ◆ Implicitly, the demand for proof is only satisfied by empirical evidence

**Assumes God is not God**

# Impossibility of Miracles

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**“...the proof against a miracle, from the very nature of the fact, is as entire as any argument from experience can possibly be imagined”**

- David Hume

- ◆ Multiple forms of argumentation
- ◆ Miracles can never be rationally believed – Hume’s argument
- ◆ Miracles contradict nature and are impossible

**Assumes God is not God**

# Science and the Bible

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**There are areas where scientific findings appear to contradict the teaching of the Bible**

**True but misleading responses:**

**“The Bible isn’t a science textbook”**

**“I believe the Bible over science”**

# Revelation, Science, and Scripture

## God's Word in Nature

## God's Word in Scripture

Accomplishes its purpose

Indirect, non-verbal

Direct, verbal

Authenticated by scripture

Self-authenticating

Require interpretation by man

**Natural and special revelation are interrelated and complementary facets of the whole unified revelation of God**

# Dealing with Apparent Contradictions

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- ◆ Just as there are no contradictions in God, there are no true contradictions between the natural world and Scripture
- ◆ Any apparent contradiction is due to a fault in man
- ◆ Harmonization between science the Bible is always possible
- ◆ When an apparent conflict arises, both man's interpretation of nature and man's interpretation of Scripture should be reexamined
- ◆ The teaching of the Bible can and should affect how we interpret nature
- ◆ The Bible, on the other hand, must always be interpreted on its own terms
- ◆ We must, with humility, recognize the finitude of man when faced with a difficult harmonization

# Christian Engagement with Science: Summary

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- 1. Understanding both the antithesis and common grace is essential to engage with non-Christian science**
- 2. So-called scientific arguments against Christianity presuppose God is not God**
- 3. There are no true contradictions between nature and Scripture, although man can err in his interpretation of both**